



## THE C. C. C.

Monthly Meetings of the Club of Curious Characters.

## A MUTINY QUELLED.

The Haunted Ship and Her Doomed Crew.

## THE LAST MEETING.

An Interruption and the End of It All.

BY LIEUT. MASON A. SHUFELDT, U. S. N.

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## SERGE SHOOT THE MATE.

"YOU dog," I shouted, "stop your mutinous gabble, or I'll clap you in irons myself!"

"He gave a cry that was more a shriek, and, jerking from the bosom of his shirt a long knife, sprang at me. He was too far away. He never reached me. There was a loud report, a burst of smoke, and Boyd lay quivering upon the deck with a bullet hole over his right eye, where the swift messenger of death had crashed through his brain. I jumped over his body and covered the other two men with my brace of pistols.

"Down! Down on your knees—quick! Up with your hands, both of you!"

"They hesitated a second, then down they went. The big Scotchman came running aft with some of the men. I shouted to him:

"Irons! Jump down into the cabin. There are a couple of pairs under the transom!"

"He was down and up in a jiffy, and we clapped them on in no time. The men were all about, looking aft and excitedly talking to each other. I shouted to two of them, calling their names. At first they did not care to obey. But after a while, when I threatened them, they sulkily came towards me. I gave them an order to take up the after-grating to the hold. This they did with the assistance of the Scotchman. I had the two prisoners put down with the cargo and the grating put on again. I then called all hands aft and made a short speech to them. I pointed out the horrors of any mutiny and the certain punishment for it in any port in the civilized world. I dwelt forcibly upon the heads, hitching of trousers and spitting.

"Now," I finally said, as I carefully re-cocked both pistols and held them exposed, "every man who returns to his duty, walk across the deck."

"They went over in a body. I put my pistols in my pockets, and, after telling the men to carry the body of Boyd forward, went into the cabin. I laid the weapons on the cabin table and poured out and drained a glass of spirits; it had been a pretty exciting day. Then I went to the door of the Boatsteward's room and tapped upon the bulkhead. There was no answer. I pulled aside the old green baize curtain that ran on rings that moved along the brass rod. I started back in horror.

"The Boatsteward lay flat upon his face on the floor stone dead, with a terrible dirk-wound in his back that had reached the heart! And, of course, I knew whose dirk had done the awful and cowardly deed."

"Nov. 10.—For the last three weeks we have been beating and tacking northward against the strongest northwest wind I ever experienced. It has sometimes amounted to almost a gale, and hit us straight in our teeth." We had not made, by my closest calculations, 50 miles on our course all that time. I was getting to be a little frightened. Our stock of water was getting a little low. The men had settled down to good behavior, but we were short-handed. I had kept the mutineers in irons all the time, taking off the hatch only to give them air and food. What with the loss of the First and Second Mates and Boatsteward, and the above-mentioned prisoners, the men were about with the constant hauling and pulling and head winds. The prospect was not bright.

"Nov. 20.—The same terrible head wind, and little or no headway. I am very anxious. The men are getting uneasy. Our water pretty low and provisions scarce. Our limejuice all gone. Have a few cases of pickles, but the situation is alarming." Towards the middle of this day and date the weather changed, but the wind came in the same direction exactly. The barometer fell rapidly and the sky was densely overcast. By nightfall it was blowing again a heavy northeast gale, with a big sea. The ship was hoove to on the port tack. Presently one of the men came aft and told me that he had just seen a light off our port bow. I went forward with him. I found a knot of men huddled together on the fore-castle, all looking seaward. One or two had seen it, but not all. I looked for some time, but I couldn't make out anything. Suddenly one of them shouted out:

"There it is, Captain; there it be!"

"Then all the men saw it and eagerly pointed it out to me."

"See it, sir? See it—there! There!"

"I could see nothing."

"It's close to us, sir! a-hobbin' on the water like a duck, sir! It may be a small boat,—an awful night to be out in one!"

"Jump aft, one of you, and fetch a light

and a rocket. They are under the break of the poop."

The man who went came back presently with two rockets, a blue-light and a sea-lantern. I leaned over against the fore-castle railing, and fired the rocket. After the rush of its radiant ascent and its purple stars had died out in the stormy sky, we all peered out into the gloom again. The light had gone. Suddenly, during an interval in the



"DOWN ON YOUR KNEES, QUICK."

crash that the tremendous seas made against our bows, I heard a long, plaintive cry—the cry of a human being in deadly distress.

"Good God!" exclaimed one of the men, seizing another by the arm; "what's that?"

"It sent a thrill of horror through me."

"Shout back, Tobias. Shout back, all of you, when I give the word."

"Our united voices were lost in the wild winds that shrieked through our rigging."

"Light the blue-light." It cast its flame upon a circle of raging sea; it gave unearthly color to the faces of the rough men around me, and marked in inky shadows the outlines of straining rigging and swaying spars. But we saw the light no more nor heard the unearthly cry.

"Keep a sharp watch, one of you. I'll go on the foreyard."

"The wind cut my face as I sat down on the huge yard, close to the foremast, and held on to the fore-rigging for support. Heavy clouds were flying across the storm-riven sky. The vast sea looked black and angry, and struck the laboring bark with terrible force. I peered out in every direction for a long time. I could see absolutely nothing."

"Poor fellow," I muttered; "God help him!"

"This, gentlemen," said Serge slowly, "is the blessed year of grace 1888, but as sure as I am a living man, a human voice replied to me."

"The words were hardly out of my mouth, when a shrill voice close to my ear answered:

"Poor fellow, poor fellow! A hard night; a nasty, black and stormy night—Serge!"

"I turned quickly towards the sound. As there is an Almighty God, seated on the yard by my side was the form and

HATED FACE OF ALFRED BOYD!

The same malicious smile; the same drop of the eyelids; the same black mustache, and a bullet-hole in his forehead, just over the right eye!

"I stared at him; I could only stare. Every nerve in me was upon a needle's point. The power of muscular action deserted me. I could not raise my hand or voice. I began to lose my senses. I quivered in every limb. I dropped my hold of the rigging and buried my face in my hands before I dared to look again. Years seemed to pass and ages to shock my views of life and immortality. I thought, thought, rapidly and wildly thought. The wind howled its fierce monotone; the great ship rose and fell to the dark and thundering sea, and the black storm-clouds rushed across the blacker sky. But what was this my human eyes had seen? I slowly raised my head at last, and turned my face to it.

"The vision had gone!"

"Dec. 13.—The same head wind, unchanging, steady as the needle of a compass. What we sometimes make in the day we as surely lose at night. Gale after gale we have ridden out. Blow after blow, all from the same direction. Little by little the ship is being forced farther south and the weather growing colder and more boisterous. The water is now very low." I had made my mind up a dozen times to change our course to the eastward and try to reach Java or some of the outlying islands. It was too late now. The ship had neither the water nor provisions for so long a voyage, and we were far south now of the Cape of Good Hope. One—two days before this I was walking on the poop, when I saw a man come aft and stand by the mainmast. He took off his cap, a sign that he wanted to see me. I went down the ladder to him. His name was Hansen, a Swede, a good worker and a fine seaman.

"What's the matter, Hansen?"

"I'm sick, Captain; very sick."

"Where sick, lad? Tell me."

"He threw back his head, and opening his mouth wide thrust out his tongue. I looked at him closely. He closed his mouth again. I told him I thought I could help him, and would send him something. He went forward. I went aft and continued my walk up and down the poop. Only my hands were clenched behind me, and fears were gripping tight about my heart. Yes, I knew what was the matter with him."

HE HAD SCURVY!

"Dec. 23.—In my position to-day I found that we had lost not less than 60 miles to the southward. What, I wonder, is going to become of us? Three days ago Hansen died of the dreaded scurvy. We buried him yesterday. There are four new cases to-day. The little water left is stale and brackish. We have had no rain. There is not a drop of limejuice in the vessel or a quart of vinegar. We have gotten down to the last tier of barrels of the tough salt beef. We make no headway, and are rapidly falling away from the track of commerce."

"I rested on my oars and stared at what I saw."

My face towards the little cabin. Great God! there was a dim light burning there, and I knew I had left none lit! I lay back trembling with fear; for, be it remembered, I was much weakened with constant strain, want of proper food and exposure. Presently I became more composed. I thought that I might have been mistaken about the light. I gradually gathered sufficient courage to get up; I slipped on my clothes before I left the room, for I intended to take a stroll on deck to cool my nerves. This completed, I drew back my curtain and stepped into the little cabin.

I staggered to the cabin wall at what I saw. I felt, with nervous fingers, the smooth paint, and even the seams in the woodwork behind me. I breathed laboriously and with a tightening feeling, as of a strap of steel about my chest. I could utter no word. Speech and sense and thought all had fled me. Vision alone remained.

A SPIRIT VISITANT.

"Seated at the table, with head bent down, with cringing figure, with the dim light falling upon his black and curly hair, sat the dead mutineer, Boyd! He was busy writing with a pencil upon a slip of paper.

He rested a moment, as if in deep thought, then nervously erased some word and re-wrote it swiftly. Presently he impatiently pushed the paper away from him, and rested his head upon his enormous hand. At last he slowly turned his face to me and smiled. He sat back in the cabin chair and stared at me. He brought his fingers up and twisted, calmly, his black mustache; then ran his palm over the livid scar above his eye. How long this lasted I cannot tell. I only knew that he beckoned me and pointed to a chair. I could not resist—I took it. He rested both elbows on the table and faced me, gazing steadily at me. His unearthly presence seemed slowly, like some odious vapor, to surround me; my mind was weak and weary; my nerves shattered and astray. I felt creeping over me the coming of lethargy and dreamy unconsciousness. My eyes fell from him, and I slowly slipped from the seat to the cabin floor; but not before I heard a hollow voice repeat:

"At last, at last, this restless spirit may find an endless sleep!"

"There is little more to tell," said Serge, closing the little book and placing it in his pocket. "I will briefly tell the story of my terrible experience. When I came to myself I was prone upon the floor. The light was still burning, but very dimly. I looked about me, after I got upon my feet. There was no one in the cabin. Quickly I detected the smell of smoke—of the burning of light wood. I staggered to the cabin door. I threw it open. A blinding volume of thick smoke came in. All my senses were now

"I sprang out on deck. Before I had reached the hold a column of white and roaring flame shot up the great hatch almost in my face. The lumber load was a mass of heat. I could hear the roaring of the fire in the bowels of the ship. I knew I had but a moment to spare. I quickly ran to my boat and lowered it into the water. The sea was smooth and it was nearly a calm. I clambered down into her and cut the tackles that held her. I pulled away a couple of hundred feet. Then I looked back at the vessel.

"It did not take long for the whole ship to become one mass of flame. Soon the fire reached her masts, her rigging and her half-filled sails. Like fiery snakes it crept aloft; like ropes of crimson it swathed her spars; in sheets of crackling blaze it surged about her canvass. I rested on my oars and stared at what I saw. I drew my breath and thanked my Maker; for, by the little cabin-hatch, I saw standing, with folded arms and drooping head, now wrapped in the seething fire, the gaunt form of my spirit foe—the Second Mate, Alfred Boyd!"

THE RESCUE.

"The following morning I was picked up by the English ship *Laura Thorn*. She had been attracted by the burning of the hapless *Annie Dolores*, and had changed her course to the rescue. She carried me to London, the last survivor of the most remarkable adventure in sailing distant seas that ever fell to the lot of man."

Serge bowed to the company assembled, and resumed his seat.

At this moment there came a loud ring at the rusty doorbell of the club. One of the Lascars hastened to it. All awaited in quiet surprise.

THE LASCAR WAS CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY A tall, thin man, with a sharp, hatchet face and prominent nose. He wore a high, much-battered, tall hat, which was shoved back on his head so as to expose its almost total baldness. His body was clothed in a long, sordid black coat, that almost touched the floor. His whole appearance was indicative of perfect carelessness as to dress or appearance. His hands were long and bony; his manner exceedingly nervous and excitable, and his glance penetrating. It was the long-absent member of the club, Dr. Kliniki. He carried under his arm a long, but square, tin box, such as are commonly used for kerosene, for it had on top the usual little spout projecting, to pour out the oil. In this spout was a small cork. He placed this box upon the table. Then he spread out both hands upon the cloth, and leaning forward, still standing, he fairly glared in turn at each member of the C. C. C. Finally, he jerked out, in a harsh, shrill voice:

"Good-evening, gentlemen!"

Some of the members bowed, others did not return the salutation, but all looked uneasy.

"I have inclosed in this receptacle," and he placed his bony hand upon it, "what do you think? Can you guess? It is the result of my life's work! Of years of untiring study! Of nights of stupendous dreams! Of hours of yearning and earnest prayers for hope and success!"

"It is a human soul!"

He looked down upon the greasy box with a grim smile, and placed his other hand upon it.

"It is a human, immortal soul, preserved in the wonderful fluid I have finally succeeded in manufacturing. It cannot escape except through this little spout. And I have corked that up tight, you see."

He grinned at his own conceit, and shook his head in a wise manner. Several mem-

bers of the club had risen from their seats and were moving away.

"Lift me up!" shouted the man at the head of the table. "Lift me up and take me out!" The Lascars did so.

"Wait! Wait!" shrieked the Doctor. "You do not believe me! You doubt, all of you. See, I will prove it! I will show it to you!" It speaks; it is—!"

He had hastily drawn the cork. His quick hand took something from his pocket. It was a match. He struck it on the breast of his shabby coat and held its flame to the little nozzle!

There was a loud report. The room was filled with smoke and fire, and pieces of the can flew over the room; streams of some liquid ran in blazing flames of bluish fire over the table, on the floor, and reached the heavy curtains. The whole room was ablaze! Dr. Kliniki lay senseless upon the now blazing carpet.

Serge and the man with the scar on his face lifted the prostrate form and hurried with it to the door. The rest of the members, realizing what was about to happen, had already fled. In the street the man with the Feminine Voice calmly stepped to a fire-box and sounded the alarm. Then came the clang! clang! of the engine bells and the mad gallop of rushing horses; the hurrying crowds; sheets of flame burst from the house, and billows of hot smoke poured upwards. The Club of Curious Characters was doomed, indeed.

In the gray dawn of the following morning there stood a tall, straight figure, looking across the way at the yet smoking pile of charred timbers and tumbled bricks. He wore a black coat, buttoned tightly to his chin, and his hands were clasped behind him.

It was the Count P. D.

"Well," he muttered, "that ends the C. C. C."

And he turned upon his heel and walked rapidly down the silent street.

[The end.]

QUAY AT FREDERICKSBURG.

BY C. E. LOWER, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Have you ever heard told the story How Matthew Stanley Quay

Was a lot of fun and a good deal of No? Then to you I'll tell it, Though oft it has been told By admiring comrades. Well, it is a story never old.

Quay was Colonel of the regiment, One hundred and thirty-four, That loyal Pennsylvania sent To water with its guns

The soil of Old Virginia; and Of all her gallant sons None braver fought in Southern land Or were handsier with their guns.

'Twas in the Fall of sixty-two, When Union stock was low, And victories extremely few, And army movements slow,

That Quay had raised his regiment And hastened to the front, With loyal heart and true intent To share the battle's brunt.

Along the heights of Palmyra then Our army was encamped, And on the Rappahannock's banks Our watchful sentries tramped;

While Fredericksburg, that quaint old town, Across the river lay, And on the heights, out there beyond, The rebels had come to stay.

There Quay took sick; high noon death By fever he was brought; Its promised ending lessened much His chance of being shot;

For long and hard he fought for life, Death tried to "run him in," But Quay came victor from this strife— He always fights to win.

But weak and worn was Col. Quay When convalescence came; His step was slow, and thin they say His former staffwart frame.

Now, though to service in the field His heart did him incline, By shattered health compelled to yield, He wisely did resign.

Then through the system of red tape, And rounds and roundabout, An order came in proper shape, That Quay be mustered out.

Said Tyler, his superior then: "Colonel, it gives me sorrow To see you mustered out to-day; We're going to fight to-morrow."

Then spoke Matthew Stanley Quay, While his eyes quick flashing light, Told that though weak his body was, His soul was full of fight:

"Take back this cursed order; here I with my boys will stay, And in to-morrow's battle share The fortune of the day."

Said Gen. Tyler, "It is too late, O'Brien commands your men; And you are now, and from this date, A private citizen."

Then wrote was Matthew Stanley Quay; "Give me a musket, then I'll go private into the ranks, And fight among my men."

In vain his comrades urged him then: "You're fool!" they bluntly said, To think of fighting battles, when You ought to be in bed.

Firm as a rock, or an army mule, This answer Quay did give: "I'd rather be killed and called a fool, Than called a coward and live."

Said Tyler: "A private, well I know, You are too weak to be; If into this battle you will go, Be Aid-de-Camp to me."

So Col. Matthew Stanley Quay, And went into the fray; Serving as Gen. Tyler's Aid All through that dreadful day.

Of Fredericksburg, and everywhere He on the field appeared, The boys paused in their fighting there, And for him wildly cheered.

And wherever the bullets fiercest storm, And wherever the hottest fray, Through the battle's smoke was seen the form Of Matthew Stanley Quay.

As he led the way in that hopeless fight, Were heroes died in vain, On the bloody slope of that death-crowned height Which valor could not gain.

This is the story of Col. Quay, Who, to save his honor from doubt, Went into the battle and fought all day, When sick and mustered out.

Now fill your glasses, now you're dry, And drink this toast: Here's to him who, though a fool would die, Than as a coward live.

He rested a moment, as if in deep thought, then nervously erased some word and re-wrote it swiftly. Presently he impatiently pushed the paper away from him, and rested his head upon his enormous hand. At last he slowly turned his face to me and smiled. He sat back in the cabin chair and stared at me. He brought his fingers up and twisted, calmly, his black mustache; then ran his palm over the livid scar above his eye. How long this lasted I cannot tell. I only knew that he beckoned me and pointed to a chair. I could not resist—I took it. He rested both elbows on the table and faced me, gazing steadily at me. His unearthly presence seemed slowly, like some odious vapor, to surround me; my mind was weak and weary; my nerves shattered and astray. I felt creeping over me the coming of lethargy and dreamy unconsciousness. My eyes fell from him, and I slowly slipped from the seat to the cabin floor; but not before I heard a hollow voice repeat:

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